

Randolph County Commissioners

June 21, 2004

The Randolph County Board of Commissioners met at 2:00 p.m. for a special budget session in the Commissioners Meeting Room, County Office Building, 725 McDowell Road, Asheboro, NC. Commissioners Holmes, Kemp, Mason, Davis, and Frye were present.

Randolph County Schools

Dr. Bob McRae, Superintendent, discussed four budget issues:

- High school facilities – They have \$135 million in facility needs. There are 48 modular units at the 4 high schools and overcrowding of 375-400 per school. Expected enrollment for the fall is 5100, and capacity is 3500. Their first priority is to construct a new Northeast High School; second priority is a new high school in the Trinity area. They recommend the County use Certificates of Participation (rather than bonds) to finance these projects as soon as possible.
- Capital Outlay – Their request is the same as last year, \$2,297,770. The only new items are a boiler at Trinity and live projects at Eastern and Trinity.
- Current Expense – Their requested amount, \$13,612,047, has a 1% increase for salary supplements.
- Archdale/Trinity Supplemental School Tax – The Archdale/Trinity Tax Council is requesting that the tax be increased from 7 cents to 8 cents.

Asheboro City Schools

Dr. Diane Frost, Superintendent, highlighted this year's accomplishments related to academic achievement and facility improvements. She noted that Asheboro City Schools would be celebrating its 100th anniversary in the coming year.

Their requested Current Expense budget has an 8% increase from last year. One expansion item is an increase in salary supplements. They have hired a consultant to study their facilities problems; they should have the results of that study by August. Dr. Frost distributed a handout showing their projected facility needs for the next ten years. Their first priority is renovation and additions for Teachey Elementary.

Randolph Community College

Dr. Dick Heckman, President, said that RCC serves over 12,000 students and that they had experienced a 42% growth in full-time equivalent enrollment since 1999. They are adding a biotechnology program in the fall and will be adding other programs in the near future, such as a certification course for 911 telecommunicators. Their requested budget has a much-needed increase of \$118,502. The Capital Outlay budget of \$2.8 million has \$880,000 for renovations to facilities and the remainder to be added to fund balance for acquisition of property.

Seagrove Library

Richard Wells, Randolph County Public Library Director, discussed the need for a new library in Seagrove. He distributed a handout, including photographs, from a Seagrove citizens' group. He said this group planned to speak later in the day at the budget public hearing. The existing building is one built by the Grange in 1972. They have charged only \$50 a month rent, which just covers their cost per year for insurance. The building is very small, in bad condition, and has increasing amounts of mold and mildew in the basement. The Randolph County Schools has donated 1.5 acres next to Seagrove

Elementary School to use for a new library building. The Town of Seagrove is so small that they cannot help with the cost of construction, which is estimated to be \$750,000. They will help with the ongoing costs and will provide water. The Archdale Library Board of Trustees has given permission to use the blueprints for their original 4,500-square-foot building. Dean Spinks, architect for the Archdale Library, has, at no charge, drawn a site plan for the Seagrove Library.

Mr. Wells pointed out that the Seagrove Library serves much of southern Randolph County (about 20,000 people), not just the Seagrove area. It is also greatly used by the school children of the area and serves as a homework center. In addition, RCC computer classes are offered at the library. Mr. Wells recommended that staffing be doubled in the new library, which would mean two 24-hour employees and two 12-hour employees.

Historic Courthouse

Richard Wells, Chairman of the Historic Courthouse Committee, reported that Bill Moore, who worked for the Greensboro Historical Museum for 41 years before retiring, has been contracted to work on the feasibility of using the old Courthouse as a museum. When his work is done, an architect would need 90-120 days to complete a report based on Mr. Moore's recommendations. That report should be ready by January 2005. The Committee is looking into state and federal grants that might be available to restore the old Courthouse, since it is a historical building.

Recreation Master Plan

Hal Johnson, Chairman of the Parks and Recreation Committee, reviewed the process by which the Recreation Master Plan was developed and what it recommends. The Plan, if implemented, would cost \$29,710,000 over a 15-year period. Mr. Johnson said that 2¢ on the tax rate would pay for construction of parks up to 2020. The Parks and Recreation Committee would make recommendations on how to spend the money. He called on Aimee Scotton, County Attorney, to explain an option for funding.

Ms. Scotton stated that as a way to gauge the feeling of the public, a question could be put on the November ballot concerning a 2¢ tax increase to pay for parks and recreation. However, North Carolina law allows only those questions authorized to be on a ballot, and recreation is not one that is authorized. Randolph County would have to get a local bill passed by the General Assembly to allow a non-binding referendum on a 2¢ tax for parks and recreation. Senator Tillman has drafted a local bill that would allow us to place this question on the November ballot. The Board of Commissioners would need to vote on this issue at their July meeting.

Agencies Requesting First-Time Funding

Patrick O'Hara, Board of Directors of the Central Carolina Soccer Club (CCSC) and Director of the Randolph-Asheboro YMCA, stated that soccer in Randolph County has grown tremendously in recent years, with 5,000 children and adults participating. There are not enough soccer fields available, and the CCSC can't find affordable land to buy to put more fields on. He said two soccer fields at the YMCA could be enlarged to accommodate middle school, high school, and adult soccer for \$58,000. He requested that the County give \$58,000 to the CCSC to enlarge these fields.

Jimmy Walker, member of the CCSC and Sports Director at the YMCA, talked about the problem with the Hispanic community using the YMCA's soccer fields.

Budget Discussion

The Board engaged in discussion of the various budget requests they had received. At 5:00 p.m. they recessed until the 7:00 p.m. public hearing.

Budget Public Hearing

At 7:00 p.m. the Board adjourned to a duly advertised public hearing on the proposed FY 2004-2005 budget. Chairman Holmes opening the public hearing.

Bonnie Renfro, Randolph County Economic Development Corporation President, thanked the Commissioners for their continued support and asked the Board to consider increasing the EDC appropriation from \$190,000 (2003-2004 appropriation) to \$202,500. Ms. Renfro mentioned the eventual return on the County's investments on recent new and expansion projects. She said that her staff has worked very diligently to hold costs down but the requested increase will help to cover increased rent, insurance and personnel expenses. She said that this is the first time in 5 years that the EDC has requested an increase.

Venetia Smith, 5978 Southrock, Seagrove, spoke in support of a new library for the Seagrove area. She described the dilapidated conditions of the current facility with its leaky ceiling, which has caused mold problems, lack of handicap accessibility, structural damage, and crowded conditions. She said that the librarians have to bring their own drinking water because the water is not potable. She also mentioned the awful stench in the building.

Crystal King Elliott, 1514 Keyanee Dr., Asheboro, also spoke in support of a new Seagrove library. She said that as a child she used the Seagrove library a great deal, especially in the summer. She said that now parents won't take their children there because of the poor conditions and the mold problem. She said that a new library in Seagrove would benefit people all over southern Randolph County, not just Seagrove residents.

About 40 people stood in support of funding a new library in Seagrove.

Judy Saunders, 1402 Allred St. Asheboro, said that she was "just a taxpayer" and that she is opposed to the proposed salary increases for department heads. She said that she did not oppose increases for EMTs, child protective services or law enforcement. She said that department heads should not receive any more than the proposed 2.5% across-the-board increase because giving just the department heads additional increases would be unfair.

Patrick O'Hara, 254 Hunt Master Trail, Asheboro, spoke on behalf of the Central Carolina Soccer Club. He asked the Board to consider a \$58,000 one-time appropriation in order to expand 2 soccer fields at the YMCA to accommodate adult, middle school and high school teams. He said that there are no local fields available for these citizens to use. If these fields could be expanded there is potential for hosting tournaments, which would bring people into Randolph County from all over the Southeast.

About 15 people raised their hands in support of this request.

Dennis Farlow, 4425 Pine Valley, Trinity, spoke in support of the Randolph County Schools and the wonderful job that the teachers do. He suggested that the Board consider requiring audits of the school systems to determine whether funds and personnel are being utilized in the best possible way.

Missy Rankin, Past President of the Asheboro Friends of the Library, spoke in support of a new library in Seagrove.

Mary Joan Pugh, Vice Chair of the Randolph County Tourism Development Authority, spoke in support of the Recreation Master Plan and asked the Board to adopt the Plan and appoint a Parks and Recreation Commission immediately. She said that there had already been numerous public meetings held concerning this issue and that it was obvious that the public supports it. She reminded the Board that 2 mayors suggested a 2-cent tax increase for recreation during the public hearing that was held earlier in the year. She said that it has already been 3 years since the County started this project. If the Commissioners decide to put a non-binding referendum on the November ballot asking residents if they support a property tax increase of up to 2 cents to fund the Recreation Master Plan, it would delay the Plan's implementation for another whole year.

David Smith spoke on behalf of the Asheboro City Council, and asked the Commissioners to adopt the Recreation Master Plan now. He said that the Asheboro City Council passed a resolution in support of the County's adoption of the Plan. He said that the Master Plan doesn't encourage the County to "get in the recreation business" but it supports the expansion of existing municipal facilities, which will benefit all citizens of Randolph County. He said that not many county residents would vote for a recreation tax because many are already using municipal facilities for free. With the expansion and creation of parks in the Master Plan, the potential for sports tournaments could be an economic boost for the County's economy. He said that the Commissioners have the authority to proceed with the Master Recreation Plan and asked the Board not to postpone their decision by putting it to a vote in November.

Becky Spencer, 3848 Hillsdale Dr., Sophia, spoke in support of the County Schools' request. She also supports the Archdale/Trinity supplemental school tax increase request.

Jim Rains, 7929 U.S. Hwy 64E, Ramseur, thanked the Board for their funding support last year for the schools and spoke in support of the schools' funding requests.

Approximately 80 people stood in support of a tax increase for schools.

Ken Koch, Vice President of the Central Carolina Soccer Club (CCSC), spoke in support of the CCSC's request for funding for expansion of the YMCA soccer fields. He also said that the Hispanic citizens need a place to play.

Patrick O'Hara said that one need not be a member of the YMCA to use the soccer fields. If the YMCA is not using the fields, anyone can use them as long as they don't abuse them. He said that the expansion of the YMCA fields is a collaboration of the YMCA and the CCSC, but the funds, if appropriated, would be paid to and managed by the CCSC.

Susan McKenzie, 211 Edna St., Asheboro, said that she was the President of the Seagrove Civitans, and spoke in support of a new Seagrove library. She said that it had occurred to her that all the comments she had heard at this meeting concerned children.

Eric Hoffman, Chief of Eastside Fire Dept., urged Commissioners to support an increase in the Eastside Fire Dept.'s fire district tax from five cents to seven cents. He said the money would go to

fund one full-time and one part-time person to be at the station during the day. Mr. Hoffman stated that he also supports a tax increase to improve emergency services, schools and a new Seagrove library.

George Kivett, President of the Ash-Rand Rescue Board of Directors, asked the Board for an increase in Ash-Rand's appropriation from \$14,225 (last year's appropriation) to \$20,000 for the 2004-05 fiscal year.

Greg Bryant, Treasurer of Ash-Rand Rescue, also urged the Board to increase Ash-Rand's appropriation to \$20,000. He said that Ash-Rand was the only heavy rescue agency in the county and is considered to be one of the best in the state.

Robert Deese, Asheboro resident, spoke in support of Central Carolina Soccer Club's request for funding for expansion of soccer fields.

Robert Snyder, P. O. Box 936, Ramseur, said that he paid his Franklinville Fire District taxes to the County and asked why the County can't control "the mess" that's still going on in Franklinville. He said he was sent a letter from the Franklinville Fire Department telling him that he cannot attend any more Franklinville fire meetings. He said the reason he was sent this letter was because he expressed his opinion during one of the meetings. He says that already between \$50,000 and \$60,000 has been spent in court costs and nothing has helped.

Aimee Scotton, County Attorney, stated that Randolph County collects the money for the fire tax districts and contracts with the fire departments to provide fire protection. The County cannot legally force the open meetings law issue.

Gary Caudle, 3996 Bethany Church Rd., Franklinville, spoke in support of the schools' requests. He says he thinks that the Commissioners should do something to bring Randolph County's ranking up from the bottom of the state list regarding funding for schools. He asked why Randolph County couldn't have a countywide supplemental school tax. He said that he thinks parents will support a bond referendum for schools.

Commissioner Frye told Mr. Caudle that because Archdale/Trinity already has a supplemental school tax a countywide tax is not possible.

Adjournment

At 8:25 p.m., the Board adjourned.

J. Harold Holmes, Chairman

Darrell L. Frye

Phil Kemp

Robert B. Davis

Robert O. Mason

Cheryl A. Ivey, Deputy Clerk

